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RESERVE

Food Stamp Facts..

Eligibility Requirements



The Food Stamp Program enables low-income households to buy more food of greater variety to improve their diets. To purchase food stamps, participants pay a sum of money based on family size and net monthly income. They then receive food stamps of a larger value than the amount paid. The food stamps can be spent like money at authorized food stores.

To qualify for food stamps, households must meet certain nationwide eligibility standards. The following explains these standards in more detail.

1. WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR FOOD STAMPS? Certain single and family households. To be eligible for food stamps, they must meet nationwide standards for income and resources or have all household members receiving public assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). (SSI recipients are not eligible in New York, Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin, and Nevada.) They must also be living as one economic unit, either singly or as a group of persons, excluding roomers, boarders, and live-in attendants, and be able to prepare meals except in special circumstances. Able-bodied household members 18 and over must register for employment.

2. WHAT IS INCOME? Income is any money received by all members of the household, except students under 18 years old. It includes wages; public assistance, retirement, disability benefits; pensions; veterans', workmen's, or unemployment compensation; old age, survivors', or strike benefits; support payments, alimony, scholarships, educational grants, fellowships and veterans' educational benefits; dividends, interest, and all other payments from any source which may be considered a gain or a benefit.

3. WHAT ARE THE INCOME STANDARDS FOR A HOUSEHOLD? Households in which all members are receiving public assistance or certain general assistance payments are eligible for food stamps without regard to income and resource eligibility standards.

The monthly net income all other households can have and take part in the program is based on family size. The maximum allowable income for these households including those in which some members are receiving public assistance or general assistance in any state (except Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and Guam)* or the District of Columbia shall be the higher of:

(1) The maximum allowable income standards for each household size which were in effect in a state or the District of Columbia before July 19, 1971, or

(2) The following maximum monthly income standards (shown according to household size):

1	\$194	5	\$606
2	280	6	700
3	406	7	793
4	513	8	886

For each additional household member over eight, add \$73.

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*These areas have separate standards because of differing food costs.

4. WHAT HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES CAN BE DEDUCTED? Expenses deducted from income include such mandatory expenses as: local, state and Federal income taxes; Social Security taxes under FICA; retirement, union dues, and a work allowance. Other allowable deductions are medical costs (but not special diets) when more than \$10 a month; child care to accept or continue employment; training and education; fire, theft, hurricane or other disaster expenses; educational expenses which are for tuition and mandatory school fees; court ordered support and alimony; rent, utilities, or mortgage payments above 30 percent of income after all other deductions.

5. WHAT ARE RESOURCES? Resources are such liquid assets as cash on hand, in a bank, or in other savings institution accounts; U.S. Saving Bonds; stocks and bonds; and such nonliquid assets as buildings (except for the family home), land, and certain real or personal property. Each household is allowed up to \$1,500 in resources except for those households of two or more persons with a member or members age 60 or over. Then the resources may not exceed \$3,000.

6. WHAT RESOURCES ARE EXCLUDED? Some resources that are not considered in determining food stamp eligibility are home and lot; one licensed vehicle and any other vehicles needed for purposes of employment; life insurance policies; real estate that produces income consistent with its fair market value; tools of a tradesman; farm machinery, etc.

7. DOES EVERYONE HAVE TO REGISTER TO WORK? Yes. With few exceptions, everyone between 18 and 65 years of age who is able-bodied must register to work. If one member refuses to register, the entire household becomes ineligible for food stamps. (For further information, see Food Stamp Facts...Work Registration).

8. HOW SHOULD THE HOUSEHOLD APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS? The head of the family contacts the local office of the welfare department. He completes an application form and is interviewed by a representative of the welfare department. He should have papers to show where he lives; how many are in the family; how much income they have; how much they are paying for rent, medical bills, child care, education, and other expenses.

9. IF AN ELIGIBLE FAMILY MOVES TO ANOTHER FOOD STAMP AREA, DO THEY HAVE TO REAPPLY? No. A family intending to move to another food stamp area should apply at their welfare office for a transfer certification. If the household composition has not changed at the time of the intended move, certification will be continued for 60 days in the new area. But the household must request recertification within the 60 days following the move.

Any food stamp participant may request a fair hearing if he feels a decision regarding his participation has been unfair. Each household should be informed of its right to a fair hearing at the time of application. The standards for participation in the Food Stamp Program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex or political beliefs.

**FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FOOD STAMP
CERTIFICATION OR WELFARE OFFICE**

The Food Stamp Facts series includes:

- Allotments and Purchase Requirements (FNS-70)
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